

1/25/09

Dear Chairman and Committee,

My name is Glenna Drees. I am disabled and am on the Long Term Care program. I want to take this time to thank you for the funding that has helped me so much.

My main funding concern is the spend down. My bills have gone up over the amount I can keep just isn't enough to cover everything that needs to be covered.

It is also necessary that more funding be allocated for the Long Term Care program. More slots need to be increased to lower the waiting list.

I appreciate the funding for the health care insurance so our care gives us stay healthy. We can't afford to let them get sick as they are needed so badly.

Sincerely,
Glenna Drees

1/26/2009

Dear Committee Member:

Please read my letter;

Nobody ever thinks it will happen to them or a loved one. My dad sure did not think he would end up in a nursing home at age 35. It all happened so fast; a diagnosis with a type of muscular dystrophy and the next thing we knew he was stuck in a wheelchair and living in a nursing home. A nursing home is no place for a 35 year old; everything is geared toward the elderly; the food, the activities, the staff. He fought hard to get out and live as normal and independent of a life as he could. He would not have been able to live independently in the community without additional services from the Home and Community Based Services program. For the next 13 years, for the most part, he lived in his own apartment and that is what kept him going. Young at the time, I was not sure how it all worked but I knew that his needs were being met and he regained his eagerness to live. It inspired me to join the field of social work, complete my practicum at Community Medical Center's Home and Community Based Services and almost 2 years ago became a permanent part of the team as a social work case manager. Currently, we have around 300 people on our waiting list who are at risk of being placed in a nursing home or currently residing in one. It is worth mentioning that along with providing individuals the opportunity to live in the community as independently as possible it is also substantially cheaper. It cost taxpayers more money to support a person in a nursing home than to pay for additional services for them to live as you and I. I thank you for your continued support of our program. Please grant additional slots for the HCBS program so that others have the same opportunity as my dad and we save state tax dollars.

Along those same lines and my experience as a family member, a caregiver and now a case manager I also want to express the need for continued caregiver raises and provider rate increases. On a side note-please look at the term "direct caregiver"; it does not include key people as habilitation trainers and homemakers. These key people are excluded from some of the rate increases and the healthcare for healthcare workers, they ultimately are "direct caregivers". One of the biggest challenges I continue to see is the retention of caregivers, it can be a tough job and has few monetary benefits to offer. It is very frustrating for individuals to have to continue to train and open their home to so many new caregivers. With higher wages, it will stop caregivers from seeking other higher paying jobs. I hope to see a provider rate increase. The providers make it happen; working hard to obtain, train and retain caregivers to care for the individuals. I say individuals but at one time it may be somebody you know, somebody you love and we all hope but you never know it may be that we are in their situation some day. So today I ask for more HCBS slots, hab trainers and homemakers to be included under the definition of "direct caregivers, caregiver raises and provider rate increases. Thank you for your time and hard work.

Sincerely,

Cris Fleming Bloxom, BSW

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EXHIBIT ~~27~~

DATE

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